TACTICAL AND STRATEGIC APPROACHES TO GREEN MARKETING: CONCOMITANT IMPLICATIONS ON THE CORE MARKETING MIX

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Abstract

This study evaluated the implications of green marketing strategies and tactics on the core marketing mix (4P's: product, price, promotion and place/physical distribution). The social exchange theory was adopted as the underpinning theory upon which the study was anchored. The study conceptually appraised the duo of tactically and strategic approaches to green marketing activities. The study conceptually implemented green marketing tactics and strategies on green product, green pricing, green promotion and green physical distribution. The study concluded that corporate environmentalism has become an essential imperative for contemporary business, and firms that go green should have a first-mover advantage over those that do not. The study recommended that corporate organizations need to ensure that green marketing activities are integrated holistically, especially if those activities are used in market positioning or promotional campaigns. Corporate organizations need to evaluate different environmental factors that influence customer decision for green products; and adopt a combination of those factors that can bring about distinct outcomes in terms of turnover, improved market share, customer retention, productivity and profitability.

Key words: Green marketing, Green physical distribution, Green pricing, Green products, Green promotion, Tactical and strategic greening.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Global warming and issues related to the depletion of ozone umbrella are seemed to have attracted a lot of attention in the recent times. Every individual is interested quality life and healthy living, and so is the corporate entity. Sustainable life style via going 'green' has now become a natural phenomenon in everyday life. The initiative of 'green marketing' basically encompasses series of activities designed to generate and facilitate the human needs. It is against this backdrop that Neeraja-Rani, Aravind and Prasad (2014) refers to green marketing, otherwise known as environmental or ecological marketing, as all marketing activities of the firm, ranging from the conception of product idea to the actual sale of the product, which are designed with the objective to either engender a positive impact or mitigate the negative impacts of its products on the environment. In other words, green marketing promotes the idea of relatively superior environmental benefits of the product and service offerings by a company. The companies often adopt the initiative of green marketing in an attempt to take advantage of customers' growing concern about environmental degradation.

The customers often prefer environmental friendly products which must be of benefit to them in terms of safety of usage around children, nontoxic ingredients, non-chemical residues, and absences of strong fumes among others. Therefore, green marketing is rather a selfless anthological perspective of the firm to please the consumers (Unruh & Ettenson, 2010). There no gainsaying that a very large preponderance of the 21st century consumers have become more aware of decisions that make their environment safer and healthier to live in. Consequently, they are more conscious of their purchases in respect to the products they use in the course of their daily living. That is the reason for consumer preference for products that are eco-friendly and the rational decision for brands that are not harmful to global environment.

The development of green marketing initiative has certainly opened the doors of opportunities for many companies to co-brand their products into separate line, lauding the green-friendliness of some, while ignoring those of others (Bhaskar, 2013). However, some industries in the developing countries are imitating the concept of green marketing from the developed world; but despite the demonstration of strong-will and capacity, there is still a wide gap between their levels of understanding and implementation. It is to this fact that this study intends to evaluate the tactical and strategic approaches to green marketing; and at the same time, consider the concomitant implications of those approaches on the core marketing mix. This is the fundamental framework that informed the concept behind the present study.

2.0 REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.1 Concepts of Green Marketing

The American Marketing Association (2009) basically defines green marketing as marketing of eco-friendly products that are presumed to be environmentally safe; it encompasses several activities such as changes to production processes, and packaging, product modification, promotional strategies and increase awareness on compliance marketing among competitors. It is against this backdrop that Kotler and Keller (2016) refers to green marketing as promotional activities aimed at taking advantage of changing consumer attitude towards a brand. These changes are increasingly being influenced by a firm's policies and practices that affect the quality of the environment and reflect the level of its concern for the community. Green marketing further takes advantage of customer' willingness to purchase and sometimes pay a premium for products that provide private benefits to individual users as well as public environmental benefits to the aggregate consuming publics. It is in consonance with the preceding assertion that Bhaskar (2013) remarks that green marketing is the promotion of environmentally safe and beneficial products.

According to Polonsky and Rosenberger III (2001), green marketing can occur as a result of internal or external pressures. The internal pressures include:

- Cost savings: Green marketing engender greater financial savings and resources efficiency as a result of less input and reduction in wastages that emanate from environmental and industrial pollution.
- Corporate philosophy: Green marketing is incorporated into the company's strategy and thereafter integrated into its tactical operations when the companies place values on environmental objectives vis-à-vis other corporate objectives.

On the other hand, some examples of external pressures to green marketing activities include:

- The need to satisfy consumer demand: At times, corporate organizations might need to adopt green marketing initiative in direct response to consumer concern, even when it might not have been the most environmentally responsible decision.
- The requests on channel/supplier to modify inputs: At times, the established regulatory framework might require firms to re-evaluate their suppliers' environmental performance. The firms consequently put pressures on their suppliers who, in turn, also put pressures on their stakeholders to meet the appropriate standards.
- The reaction of a firm to a competitor's actions: At times, competitors' green marketing actions might force a firm to adopt green initiative or lose its market share. In a nutshell, when a firm adopts green initiative, most other firms in the industry might need to quickly follow suit rather than risk being left behind by the market competition.

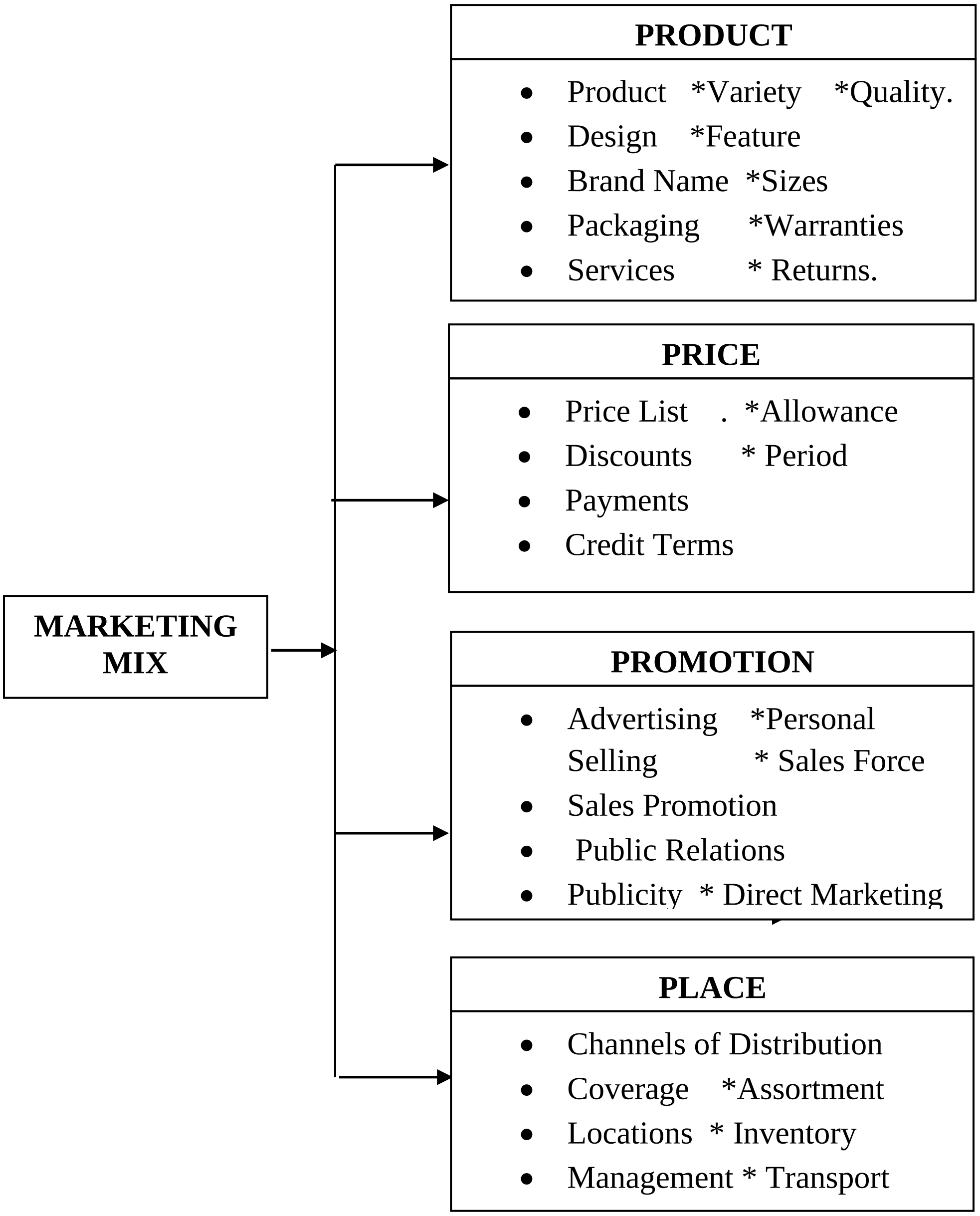
Having identified how green marketing occurs, it becomes essentially imperative to establish how corporate firms achieve their organizational and consumer objectives in more environmentally responsible ways. According to Maignan and Ferrell (2001), the objectives of green marketing include:

- The elimination of waste: Green marketing should focus on the production of products without waste instead of getting rid of waste.
- The re-invention of the product concept: Green marketing should enhance the production of quality products in consistent with the environmental commitment.
- The pricing that portray the real cost: Green marketing should engender pricing mechanisms that take customer's perceived value for the product into consideration.]
- The enhancement of profitability via the creation of operational occasions that give room for environmental conscience in the marketplace.

2.2 Concepts of Marketing Mix

Marketing mix is a general phrase used in describing the variety of choices that organizations have to make in the entire process of making their respective goods or services available to the market. Kotler and Armstrong (2016) defines marketing mix as the set of marketing tools that the firm uses to pursue marketing objectives in the target market. It is against this backdrop that Ekeke (2019) refers to the marketing mix as a term used to describe the combination of tactics used by a business to achieve its objectives of marketing its products or services effectively to a particular target customer group. Marketing mix is often synonymous with the four (4) P’s: product, price, promotion and place. According to McCarthy (1996), the marketing mix is an amalgam of what is refined in the field of marketing as the four (4) Ps namely product, price, promotion and place or physical distribution.

Figure 1: **The Four (4) P’s Component of the Marketing Mix**



Source: Adapted with minor modification from **Kotler and Armstrong (2016).**

Furthermore, marketing mix is the set of controllable marketing variables that the firm blends to produce the response it wants in the target market (Amiru &

Olayinka, 2017). In other words, the marketing mix consists of everything the firm can do to influence the demand for its products. It simply means putting the right product to the right person in the right place, at the right price, and at the right time. According to Babalola (2017), in an attempt to create the right marketing mix; corporate organizations have to meet the following conditions:

- The product must possess the right features; for instance, it has to be a product of good quality and utility.
- The price must be set right; consumers will buy in large number to enjoy the benefits of economy of scale.
- The goods have to be in the right place at the right time to ensure the utilities of place and time.
- The target market needs to be made aware of the existence and availability of the product through promotion.

Moreover, it is imperative for the marketer to convert the 4P's of marketing into the 4Cs (as developed by Robert Lauterborn and cited in Kotler & Armstrong 2016).

- Price becomes cost to the users;
- Product becomes customers' needs and wants;
- Place becomes convenience; and
- Promotion becomes communication.

According to Ekeke (2019), these 4C's reflect a more client-oriented marketing philosophy. They provide useful reminders; for instance, marketer needs to bear in mind the convenience of the client when deciding where to offer the service. Importantly, the strategic imperative is how these weapons of marketing warfare will blend together to deliver optimal customer satisfaction.

2.3 Theoretical Underpinning

The theoretical framework for this study in anchored on social exchange theory. The social exchange theory was propounded in 1952 by Thibault and Kelly. According to Onigbinde and Ojo (2016), the fundamental assumptions and principles of the social exchange theory states that:

i. Every interaction involves an exchange of goods or services.
ii. Consumers try to get from producers as much as they have given to them.

The social exchange theory explains how individual feels about a relationship with another person, depending on an individual perception of the balance between the quality of what he puts into a relationship and the quality of what he gets in return; the kind of relationship someone deserves, the chances of having a better relationship with someone else (http: //www.socialexchangetheory.com).

The theory is based on the exchange of rewards and costs to quantify the values or quality of outcomes from different situations for an individual. People strive to minimize costs and maximize rewards, and then base the likeness of developing a relationship with someone on the perceived possible quality outcomes (http://www.uky.edu/"drlane/capstone/interpersonal/socexch .html).

The viability of social exchange theory rests on the assumption that human beings recognize each other's needs, and in some ways are likely to engage in reciprocity – a condition in which a response is correlated to the worth or quality of the original message. In other words, humans act with other humans in full recognition that their acts will be noticed and in some way reciprocated; for example, that they will receive a return on their communicative investment.

The social exchange theory encourages explicit acknowledgement of the costs and benefits of actions to be promoted in a marketing communication activities, and efforts to minimize costs and maximize the benefits. In practice, to persuade someone to take part in an exchange, the person must believe that the benefits of adopting preventive behaviours outweigh the costs of purchase or adoption (http: //www.comminit.com/changetheories/ ctheories/changetheories-27. html).

Folarin (2002), however, contends that the rewards are devalued when the exchange becomes too frequent or too obvious. In line with the philosophy of social exchange theory, consumers give loyalty in return for the marketing promotional effort of an organization, while the organization may fulfil corporate social responsibility in return for continuous patronage from the customers.

All the theories identified above are scientific in approach from their orientations and their philosophical foundations. They have explanatory power owing to their behavioural antecedents. In addition, these theories have predictive power: when outcomes are perceived to be greater, individuals disclose more. It is also simple and capable of being false. The theoretical propositions with the theories are consistent with each other. These theories generate new hypotheses, therefore expanding the range of potential knowledge and organizing existing knowledge (http: //www.uky. edu/˜drlane/capstone/interpersonal/socexch.html).

Moreover, in an attempt to enhance renewed customer loyalty, all theories identified in the study's theoretical framework will form the basis on which each of the variables of market-based resources would be evaluated to arrive at a logical conclusion.

3.0 APPRAISAL OF TACTICAL AND STRATEGIC APPROACHES

A number of catch phrases have been developed in the field of green marketing. However, all of these catch phrases are focused on the realization of corporate objectives and satisfaction of consumer needs, while ensuring that the world is made a better and safer place for all. According to Polonsky and Rosenberger III (2001), the ramifications of the approaches are substantial, and require that corporate organizations think globally about their activities, while mitigating harmful environmental activities in various countries in which they operate. It is against this backdrop that Menon and Menon (1997) suggest that green marketing activities can occur at three levels in the firm: Strategic, quasi-strategic, and tactical. In anticipation of the focus of research topic under investigation, emphasis shall be placed on the duo of strategic and tactical greening.

In tactical greening, there is a shift in functional activities of a firm, such as the use of promotional campaigns to encourage customers to behave in a more responsible way. With strategic greening, however, there is a substantial fundamental change in corporate philosophy of a firm via the organic entrenchment of apparatus, policies and procedures that will automatically engender environmentally responsible behavior. In true green marketing, environmental issues become an over-riding strategic corporate focus rather than simple 'one off' strategic action. Strategic greening, therefore, often requires a change in corporate mindset as well as in corporate behaviour [i.e. tactics] (Polonsky & Rosenberger III, 2001).

According to Peattie (1999), opportunistic tactical greening often results from a perspective that

> "commodities which have no market are presumed
> to be worthless, while market mechanisms can
> correct environmental problems."

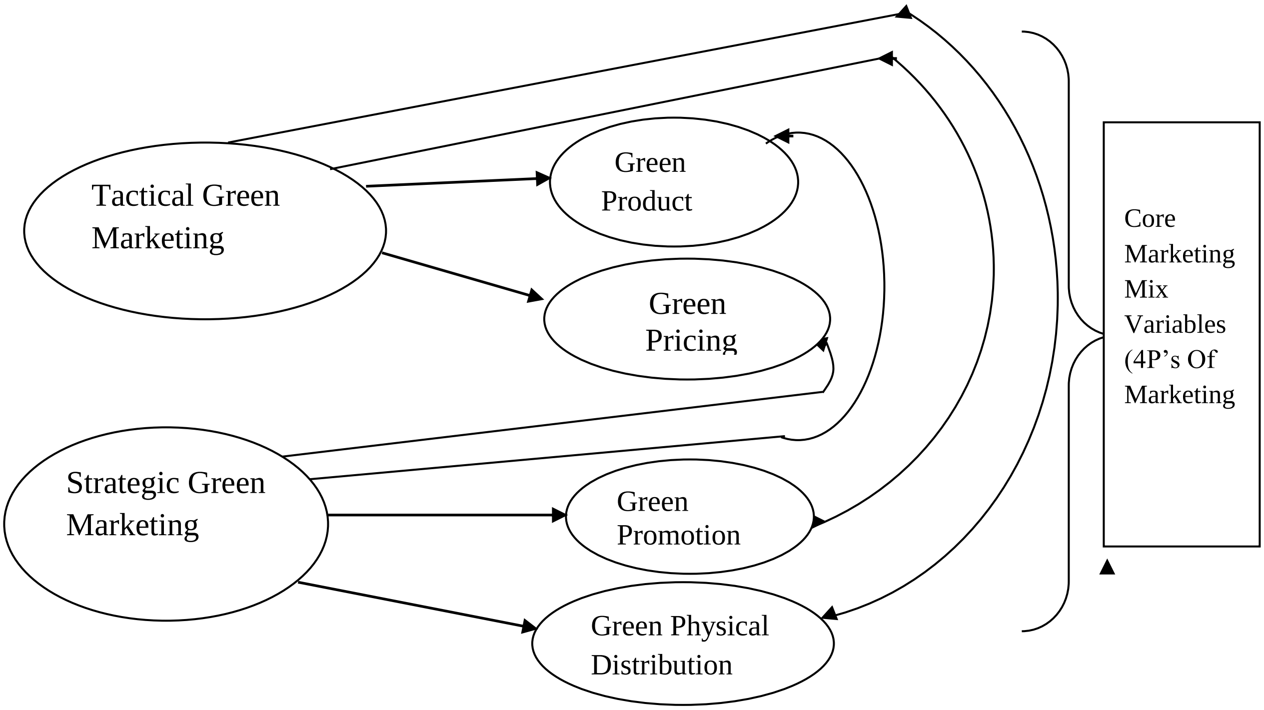
Meanwhile, such opportunism is now diminishing, however its early adoption had caused a long- term damage to genuine environmentally responsible activities (Polonsky & Rosenberger III, 2001). Moreover, it suffices to state that not all tactical greening is exploitative or inappropriate. However, the contemporary firms need to understand that there may be limited long-term benefit to this approach, except that the tactical activities are supported by broader organizational greening.

There is no gainsaying that "true" green marketing, as a complex and integrated strategic tool, has transformed beyond the basic ecological posturing of four decades ago. Both tactical and strategic greening can now be adopted to identity the level of change a firm requires and to reflect the degree of firm's commitment to various environmental objectives. On the other hand, any strategic environmental activity would require an extensive long-term financial commitment on the part of the firm involved (Crane, 2000; Karna, Hansen & Juslin, 2003). In a nutshell, strategic greening that is effectively implement would seldom be superficial, since green marketing offers business bottom line incentives and top line growth possibilities (Bhaskar, 2013).

4.0 IMPLEMENTING GREEN MARKETING TACTICES AND STRATEGIES ON 4P's

The ecological mindset has truly been integrated into conducting marketing audits by only a few firms. This makes the evaluation of the overall success of the environmentally-based green marketing programme a difficult task to accomplish. Meanwhile, some of the specific green activities are limited to one or two functional areas of business, and are not enshrined in the overall corporate philosophy. However, extensive information is available on such strategic activities and tactics; including design, pricing, targeting, positioning, 'marketing waste', logistics, and green alliances (Polonsky & Rosenberger III, 2001). To achieve the objective of this study, the implementing of green marketing tactics and strategies shall dwell on the core marketing mix; that is four (4) P's of marketing in line with the suggestion of McCarthy (1996). For the avoidance of doubt, this study is strictly focused on such strategic activities and tactics; including green product, green pricing, green promotion, and green physical distribution.

Figure 2**: Diagrammatic Paths for Implementing Tactical and Strategic Green Marketing**



Source: Researcher's Conceptual Model (2022)

4.1 Green Product

Designing less harmful "traditional" products is an integrated and complex process, requiring innovative designs (Polonsky & Rosenberger III, 2001). According to Ashley (1993), 70 percent of a product's environmental harms is designed into the product and the associated production processes. While the modification of production processes may involve start-up costs, it will eventually save some other costs in the long-run (Bhaskar, 2013). Therefore, it becomes essentially imperative for corporate organizations to incorporate environmental attributes into products and production processes, especially at the fundamental stages of new product development. As part of this process, the corporate organizations need to evaluate whether the new processes to be developed will satisfy consumers' needs or not. As a matter of fact, consumers may not have to buy physical goods if they can purchase the use of the need-satisfying capacity instead. This entails rethinking on the firm's activities, with a strategic shift in focus to the selling of products' performance (i.e their need-satisfying capacities) in lieu of the physical products ((Polonsky & Rosenberger III, 2001).

Furthermore, the firms can also use life-cycle analysis to evaluate a product's ecological impact for each production stage. This allows them to identify alternative methods of designing or producing goods, consequently opening up new market opportunities and untapped industries while reducing the marginal costs of production (Panda, 2003). While some of these tactical changes were relatively minor, others required substantial engineering changes, therefore demonstrating the significance of incorporating environmental issues into the early phase of new product development (Polonsky & Rosenberger III, 2001). In a nutshell, firms that develop new and improved products and services with environmental impacts in mind give themselves access to new markets, substantially increased profits and enjoy competitive advantage over those marketing non eco-friendly alternatives.

4.2 Green Pricing

Setting premium prices for green products is often problematic. On several occasions, consumers generally are willing to pay just a bit higher for the green products while expecting these products to perform just like other composite products. Meanwhile, equal performance is seldom possible because alteration of the product composition changes its performance, thereby posing a potential challenge to marketers who will need to work harder to change what customers perceive as acceptable standard of product performance (Madan, Mittal & Verma, 2010). However, it may be easier to demonstrate cost savings' benefit for less harmful alternatives in some cases. While green products are often priced higher than traditional goods, this does not ever imply that the green products cost more, especially when one evaluate all associated costs. On many occasions, green products might have higher initial cost but lower long-term costs and higher benefits in the long-run (Nwaizugbo & Onah, 2004; Rajan, 2006).

Moreover, less harmful products might also be adjudged costlier in both the short- and long-runs with no additional financial return. This may be as a result of the fact that traditional (non-eco-friendly) products' manufacturers do not incorporate all environmental costs associated with their production. In other words, society subsidizes ecological externalities, such as water or air pollution and toxic cleanup. On the other hand, less harmful products are not subsidized by society, therefore consumers of these goods are left with no choice other than to cover all associated costs (Polonsky & Rosenberger III, 2001).

4.3 Green Promotion

Green promotion is designed and packaged to communicate substantive environmental information to consumers that have meaningful links to corporate activities. However, green promotion might not be an effective strategic tool, except it is used in collaboration with other corporate activities. According to Polonsky & Rosenberger III, (2001), many corporate organizations realize that green promotion alone is fast becoming less effective, hence they are shifting to the promotion of ecological attributes in addition to more traditional ones, such as environmental sponsorships and cause-related marketing programmes. Therefore, promoting some real environmental attributes of a product or firm will necessitate some significant changes in the product, process and corporate focus vis-à-vis their integration with other corporate activities of the firm. Meanwhile, such changes do not necessarily have to be strategic in nature. Environmental communication can be used to execute tactical activities, such as relevant environmental sponsorships or minor product modifications (Barone, Anthony & Kinberly, 2000; Polonsky & Rosenberger III, 2001).

It becomes imperative to remark that all green promotional activities must be carefully evaluated to preserve the corporate reputation of the firm. Nevertheless, the goals of such activities need to be made explicit, while the firm must be careful to avoid unnecessary embellishment. Otherwise, consumers may perceive their green promotional activities as mere "green-hype" and thereby ignore the promotional messages. In fact, there are some controversies on whether the green appeals are actually effective in changing consumers' preferences at all or the degree to which their effectiveness may differ across consumer groups (Polonsky & Rosenberger III, 2001). Schuhwerk and Lefkort-Hagius (1995) in their article titled "Green or non-green? Does type of appeal matter when advertising a green product", found that environmentally responsible consumers were not influenced by green claims, while others were. It therefore becomes imperative for the firm to consider what consumers perceive environmental information to be, and whether they truly comprehend what is being communicated before embarking on environmental promotion (Polonsky & Rosenberger III, 2001). Communicating substantive environmental information is a more strategic approach to take but requires real changes in green marketing activity to be meaningful.

4.4 Green Physical Distribution

Physical distribution is concerned with the physical handling and movement of finished goods. It includes warehousing logistics, inventory control, transportation and all those activities required to move finished goods efficiently from the producer to the consumer (Rajan, 2006). Physical distribution is a typical concern, and one of the first functions targeted to minimize environmental costs. According to Polonsky & Rosenberger III,(2001), firms have sought to reduce raw material use by modifying packaging, which can directly and indirectly lower distribution costs as well.

Integrated transportation systems, the internet, and other initiatives have further reduced the environmental impact of distribution activities by requiring fewer transport modes, However, the most complex advances in distribution are in the area of reverse logistics, whereby manufacturing firms move packaging and "used" goods from the consumer, back-up the distribution channel to the firm (Mathur & Mathur, 2000). The reverse logistics initiative was partly motivated in the early 1990s by Germany's new first-phase regulations requiring firms to take back waste. The second-phase of these regulations went further, requiring firms to take back unwanted products from the marketplace as well (Polonsky & Rosenberger III, 2001).

Furthermore, the integrated reverse logistics on the other hand, require extensive corporate commitment in terms of strategic focus, as well as additional financial and human resources. Therefore, the reverse logistics is not a cost by definition; it is an initiative to generate more corporate revenue. According to Giuntini and Andel (1995), corporate firms need to consider six R's when developing reverse logistics strategies and processes. These include recognition, recovery, re-engineering, removal, renewal, and review as depicted in figure 3 below

Figure 3**:** **The Six (6) R's of Facilitating Reverse Logistics**

Recognition	Monitoring of goods to ensure they flow through the reverse logistics process.
Recovery	Collection of goods for reprocessing.
Re-engineering	Evaluation of existing goods for better design.
Removal	Disposal of materials that cannot be remanufactured and market the produced goods to new existing customers
Renewal	Remanufacturing of the product to its original standards, while claiming appropriate parts for reuse.
Review	Testing of materials to evaluate whether they meet appropriate reprocessing standards or can be disassembled for parts to be reused or for outright disposal.

Source: Adopted with minor modification from **Giuntini and Andel (1995)**

A firm's commitment and its position in the value chain go a long way in determining its ability to undertake activities that develop less environmentally harmful logistics (Polonsky & Rosenberger III, 2001). Green logistics can therefore be adjusted as a complex, integrated strategic activity that provides unique opportunities for sustainable corporate growth.

5.0 EVALUATION AND CONCLUSION

As the demand for green products undoubtedly exists, it may not be clear whether a corporate organization has all the necessary expertise to implement complex green marketing strategies and tactics. However, the corporate organizations need not expect huge immediate benefits for implementing green marketing. They need to view the environment as a major long-term investment opportunity. On the other hand, consumers need to be educated and made aware of the merits of green products. The principal reason for consumer patronage of green products in the first place is premised on the fact that green marketing is focused on customer benefits. If the green products are priced out of customer's reach then again it will lose its market acceptability. There is no gainsaying that the increasing competition in the green sector has driven some businesses to new heights of innovation and service, while other businesses are lagging behind. However, the surest way to green business' success in this contemporary regime of fairer trade in goods and services is to keep track of green business trends in a great way to ensure that corporate organization stays innovative, flexible, and creative in the face of new challenges and opportunities (Bhaskar, 2013). This will go a long way to enhance sustainable green promotion, both in the short-and long-run, as the consumers have positive attitude towards the enterprises that are sensitive to environmental matters.

Just like any integrated marketing communication approach, green marketing, according to Polonsky & Rosenberger III, (2001), involves extensive coordination across functional area of business operation to be effective. The level of greening, either tactical or strategic, dictates exactly what activities should be undertaken. Consumer skepticism and cynicism toward green claims generally limits the benefit of green promotion, especially tactical activities that are promoted as strategic greening. If consumers are skeptical of its motives, the tactical activities could even make consumers more critical of the firm's other less eco-friendly activities (Crane, 2000).

Meanwhile, it becomes imperative to note that strategic greening in one functional area of business may or may not be leveraged effectively in others. For instance, a firm could make substantial changes in production processes but opt not to leverage them by positioning itself as an environmental leader. Although strategic greening may not necessarily be strategically integrated into all marketing activities, it is nevertheless strategic in the area of product design and development (Polonsky & Rosenberger III, 2001).

Alternatively, tactical greening in promotions involves minimal greening of other areas. However, it might be used simply to exploit a short-term opportunity. For instance, a corporate organization might simply choose to sponsor a local environmental programme without modifying its other activities (Charter & Polonsky, 1999). This may be adjudged an "effective" corporate strategy from a broader business perspective, but not necessarily from a green marketing perspective, especially if the company is seeking to achieve sustainable broader objectives (Polonsky & Rosenberger III, 2001).

In conclusion, it suffices to remark that corporate environmentalism has become an imperative for contemporary business, and firms that go green should have a first-mover advantage over those that do not. Although it is a continuous rather than a onetime process of renewal that improves a firm's environmental and financial performances. This is necessary because knowledge and acceptable environmental practices are continually changing. However, the need for a holistic approach to green marketing cannot be overemphasized, considering the frequent limitations associated with non-integrated green marketing practices. With integrated green marketing, there is no avenue for complacency since such initiative requires extensive commitment of resources and unwavering support of the top-management echelon, which may be difficult to maintain, especially in times of broader turbulence in the business environment.

6.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

From the evaluation done and conclusion drawn from the conceptual analysis above, the following recommendations therefore become imperative.

- Corporate organizations need to ensure that green marketing activities are integrated holistically especially if those activities are used in market positioning or promotional campaigns.
- Holistic green marketing should dwell on production, distribution and consumption of eco-friendly products that harm less and avoid wastage.
- Corporate organizations need to consider holistic approach that blends environmental concerns with marketing strategy in search of innovations and opportunities.

- Innovative firms that choose to adopt a strategic environmental marketing needs to continually re-evaluate and improve on their aggregate performance.
- Finally, corporate organizations need to evaluate different environmental factors that influence customer decision for green products; and adopt a combination of those factors that can bring about distinct outcomes in terms of turnover, improved market share, customer retention, productivity and profitability.

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